

*For Immediate Release* [REDACTED]

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## CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER PROPOSES NEW SURFACE MINING PERMITTING PROCESS FOR APPALACHIAN REGION

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## ***Three-Tiered Permitting System Would Protect Environment While Supporting Region's Economy***

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[Read Congressman Boucher's Letter to the Army Corps of Engineers](#)

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WASHINGTON (Washington, D.C.) –U.S. Representative Rick Boucher today proposed a new three-tiered permitting system to be presented at the October 15 hearing on the Army Corps of Engineers proposal to eliminate the Nationwide Permit 21 for surface mining in the Appalachian Region. Boucher submitted the attached letter and the following statement:

**In June of this year, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed eliminating the use of the Nationwide 21 permit for surface mining operations in the Appalachian region, and I am concerned that this proposal, if enacted, will adversely affect the economy of our region without providing the desired benefit to the environment.**

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**Mining in the Appalachian Region provides some of our highest paying jobs, and the associated products and services create thousands of additional jobs. Tax revenues from the extraction of coal fund our schools, pave our roads and provide other essential services. I believe that it is essential to strike an appropriate balance between protecting the environment and allowing essential coal mining activities that support economic growth to continue.**

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**For that reason I have proposed to the Army Corps of Engineers a three-tiered permitting system that accomplished both purposes:**

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- The Nationwide 21 Permit would be retained for use for projects with “minimal impacts” that are defined by specific, objective criteria such as limits on the number of linear feet of stream or acreage affected or the amount and location of the fill material.□**

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· For mid-sized operations, I asked that the Army Corps of Engineers explore the potential of instituting a new Appalachian Regional Permit, which would require a higher level of scrutiny and closer coordination with the Virginia Division of Mines, Minerals and Energy but which would stop short of the more rigorous requirements of the Individual Permit process.

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· Finally, I proposed that operations exceeding the threshold of the Appalachian Regional Permit be permitted through the Individual Permit Process.

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The permitting system I have proposed would enable surface mining operations to take place in an environmentally responsible fashion and a timely manner. The recommendations were developed in close consultation with representatives of state and federal regulatory agencies and Virginia's coal industry. I believe they achieve a desirable balance between protecting our natural resources and protecting our region's economy.

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